

COUNTY-WIDE CHAPLAINCY

"There to Help
When it Hurts"

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Dear Friends of Chaplaincy,

The greeting we have often heard the last week or so is "HAPPY NEW YEAR!" It is a good greeting and wish that the days to come will be happy ones - free from anything that would keep us from being HAPPY. Evelyn and I have had some happy times as we have received cards and well wishes from so many of our dear friends. However, many families have had anything but a happy time this past month. In ten days time I have been involved with three auto accidents in the Battle Ground area in which 5 people died as a result of the injuries they received. One of them was a good friend of mine. I told someone on the scene that I have a rather selfish prayer as I respond to a fatal accident - "May it not be someone that I know." Well, after living in this county for 27 years, I do know a lot of people; and, then, I certainly get to know others in their times of crises. On 2 of these accidents, the husbands came looking for their wives who had not arrived where they were to be at a particular time. So, I met them on scene and had to tell them the terrible news. While standing with one husband as he struggled with the information, the sheriff deputy informed a lady that the road was closed due to an accident and that she would have to find another way home, or wait awhile. I couldn't believe my ears as she shouted at the officer, "I have ice-cream in my car - what do you want me to do about that!" Somehow, I had no compassion for her "ice-cream problem" at that point.

Oh, by the way, one of the difficult things we encounter on serious accidents is trying to find and notify next of kin. At one fatal accident both occupants had driver's licenses with them; so I went to one address, and Brian (from the ME's office) went to the other. Both, however, were old addresses, and it took almost 2 days to finally find someone who knew someone who knew the deceased. Boy, would it help if there was current, up-to-date information in every wallet and purse. I just got a new date book for

this year, and immediately filled out the emergency information. **So, check your purse and wallet. Get it up to date, and everyone who is there to help you will be so grateful!**

This past week I got a new cell phone which will help with some better reception. Any of you out there feel a bit "over-teched" (my spellchecker doesn't like that word)! Well, I had to read the book, and am still not sure how many beeps are necessary to make the ear piece work with the phone so I can drive safely. Oh yes, my CD player, which is in my trunk and operates by a button on my steering wheel, has an error code of "E33" and won't play. I checked that out on my computer, and I am told that it is a communication problem between the CD player and the radio, and to fix it I must disconnect the battery to let it reformat or something. The only problem with that is that if I do that, the radio locks up, and I need a code from GM to unlock the radio. Well, the car still gets me down the road. I just share this because it is typical of the high tech problems we face in today's world.

Just before Christmas I had to tell a father that his 22 year old son had taken something at a party and didn't wake up the next morning. Just the week before that he told his dad that he needed to make better decisions in his life.

Our other chaplains responded to calls like a 16 year old girl who drowned in a hot tub, a double homicide where a man stabbed a 46 year old mother and her 15 year old son, and young man who ended his life. Just a few minutes ago I was contacted to conduct his funeral.

So, the wish for a "HAPPY NEW YEAR" is still a good wish, but there are many who face very UNHAPPY situations in life. May God continue to bless our combined efforts in this new year as we are "There to Help, When it Hurts!"

Joyfully serving together with you,
Chaplain Landis Epp